

A VISION OF LIFE
By DARRELL FIGGIS
WITH AN INTRODUCTION
By G. K. CHESTERTON



A VISION OF LIFE



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POEMS. BY DARRELL FIGGIS
WITH AN INTRODUCTION &
BY GILBERT K. CHESTERTON



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TO
MY WIFE

FOR nigh four years now have these poems sought to snuff the open breeze, returning ever to me broken and disappointed. What bitterness was in this—how deep you alone know!—was yours also; but I alone knew that rarer bounty of your instant and unfailing comfort. Therefore, dear, these poems are dedicate to you beyond my power to alter or avert; and it lies for me now but to confirm the finding of the years.

INTRODUCTION BY G. K. CHESTERTON

HERE are signs of a certain stirring in English poetry, a minor Renaissance of which Francis Thompson may be regarded as the chief ensign and example. It is partly the Elizabethan spirit, that permanent English thing working its way again to the surface; but, of course, like every Renaissance, it is in many ways unlike its origin and model. It is as true in art as it is in religion, that when a man is born again, he is born different. And the latest Elizabethanism has differed not only from the actual Elizabethan work, but from other revivals of it. The great romantic movement which was at its height about the beginning of the nineteenth century, the movement of which Coleridge is perhaps the most typical product,

this movement was and even claimed to be a return to the Elizabethan inspiration. This, of course, it was in its revolt against the rhymed rationalism of Pope, in its claim that poetry was a sort of super-sense which Pope would have called nonsense. But there were two elements in the Coleridge and Wordsworth movement which prevented it, splendid as it was, from being perfectly Elizabethan.

The first was a certain craze for simplicity, even for a somewhat barbaric simplicity; a craze which was much connected with the growing influence of Germany and the purely Northern theory of our national origin. People were trying to be Anglo-Saxon instead of English. In style and diction this produced an almost pedantic plainness and love of Teutonic roots which, whatever else it was, was utterly antagonistic to the spirit of the Elizabethans. This business of the plain Saxon speech is entirely appropriate as eulogy on certain suitable things, such as the translation of the Bible; it is permissible as eulogy, but it

is intolerable as condemnation. It is certainly part of the beauty of Bunyan's work that it is built out of plain words, just as it is part of the beauty of Westminster Cathedral that it is built out of plain bricks. But as for saying that no building shall be built out of stone or marble or timber, that is quite another matter, and quite an unreasonable one. Coleridge, in the *Ancient Mariner*, did frequently manage strange and fine effects with the bald words of a ballad. But because I will not go without—

“They fixed on me their stony eyes
That in the moon did glitter,”

is no reason at all why I should go without—

“Re-visits thus the glimpses of the moon.”

The richness and variegation of the old Elizabethan style permitted peculiar and poignant effects which the Wordsworthian ballad, and even the Tennysonian lyric, did not attempt to revive. The principal objection to writing Anglo-Saxon instead of English is, after all, a very simple one: it is that the Anglo-Saxon

vocabulary is one of the smallest in the world, while the English vocabulary is one of the largest.

Mr. Darrell Figgis is one of those who give this impression of a latter-day return to the Elizabethan spirit; that is, to the real Elizabethan spirit which the romantic movement omitted—the spirit of Elizabethan enrichment and involution. The element to which I refer is already sufficiently well known in the work of Francis Thompson, in whom it could be, and indeed has been, called, not only Elizabethan complexity, but even Elizabethan affectation. The work of Mr. Darrell Figgis is less elaborate than that extreme though triumphant example; but it has the same essential qualities of sustained and systematic metrical style, of line linked with line in a process requiring the reader's attention, and remote in its very nature from the startling simplicity of the old romantic ballad. If this kind of poetry prevails, people will have to listen to it rather as they listen to good and rather difficult music, not as they

listen to scattered brilliancies in a speech by Mr. Bernard Shaw. Mr. Figgis is even Elizabethan (as was Francis Thompson also) in attempts at abrupt lyric metres, not always easy to achieve. But there was, indeed, another respect in which the early nineteenth century failed to be fully renaissant of the Renaissance. I mean that taste of sickness and aimless revolt which dominated Byron and even Shelley, and discoloured the moods of Coleridge. I am well aware of how much of strong art, of mercy, and egalitarian justice there was in the revolt, and those men in England who were its essential and spiritual enemies (such as Gifford in literature and Castlereagh in politics) are now covered with a contempt which can never be wiped away. Yet, when all is said, the weakness of the indispensable Revolution was in its artistic voices, in their notes of negation, of license, and of despair. When all is said, the Revolution succeeded in France, because it was chiefly an affair of soldiers; the Revolution failed in England, because it was chiefly an

affair of poets. If any twopenny placeman could call it mere anarchy, if any tenth-rate Tory can say that it hated God and man, the blame does not lie with the stoical religion of Robespierre or the enormous common sense of Danton ; it lies with Byron or Shelley or their belated brother Swinburne.

In this connection it is pleasant to feel that the new stirrings of the old influence are without any recurrence to the mere sentiment of ruin. In this respect the rising men rather follow Browning, who had the hope and heartiness of the Elizabethans, as well as their mystification and elaborate wit ; indeed, he had everything of the Elizabethans, except their ease. Francis Thompson spoke from a secure tower of faith. Mr. Darrell Figgis is on the side of the angels. Nothing is more satisfying in his poetry, apart from its many incidental beauties, than the evidence it offers of a certain return to right feeling and faith in life, not as an early dream of transcendentalism, but as an ultimate result of experience. The thing which tired people

call optimism is growing in many as a matter of mere fair-mindedness, and the fact is that at last a man of the world may be permitted to admire the world. I will not deny that much of my pleasure in Mr. Figgis' work arises from a sympathy with his serious and sincere enjoyment of beauty and the great things that life begets. I should like to have quoted more than one line from his *Vision of Life*. But, after all, the ground of my gratitude and mental kinship is mostly in this: that it really is a vision of life, and not merely a vision of destruction.

G. K. CHESTERTON.

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A VISION OF LIFE

A VISION OF LIFE

I SAT brewing awhile, one even's close,
Life's Destiny and Purpose. In the grate
A flickering fire shone,
Withered and wan,
Dishevelled as a hectic Autumn rose.
So, as I sate,
With elfish toe leaping the shrinking embers
A spiritous Presence passed, and on my thought
Visions of faded days, paled friendships, dreams
Of rapturous Mays smitten to drear Decembers,
In evanescent postures wrought
From forth the flickering gleams.
So death-still ranged the Night athwart the
gloom

Icy and cavernous, that the embers' tune
Spake sharp and sudden, chasing the shade and
flame
In elfish gambol round the sombre room.
So stepped the Night's high noon ;
While Time, steady of sinew and of brow
Implacable, upwound upon its spool
The fitful hours of innocence and shame.
Nor solitary, Night in its high rule,
Reigned, for from forth the frosty bowers
Deft messengers of airy fashion came
The rude Earth to endow
With heavenly mysteries of flowers.
So sat I, and my mood grew calm and still :
Irk fretted away ; care, soilure, and distress,
The smutch of strife, at the gaunt Night's caress
Unruffled into lofty peace. A will

Ineffable, visionary, swelled
My thought to something of a twilit mood.
Earth faded awhile ; the frame of sensible
things
Obliviously smote my sensitive touch ;
The populous warm walls, the grate that held
Ashes and smoulderings,
The frore behoof, and all of fashion such,
Transmuted were unto the larger scope
Of visionary aspect. Thus on wings
Of guideless flight, and thought I fain would
cope,
A Vision fared on me whate'er I would.
Then seemed the twilight heavy with filmy
glows :
Forth from before my sight two several ways
In opposite invitation rose,

Oweing no kith, diverse of hue as aim.
Darkling the Right ran, thro' a drear amaze
Craggy and barren, fulfilled of sloughs and
mire ;
Most straitly was it limned, and oft each side
Fell sheer to plumbless horror steep, that swept
Spaceless, in ebon vastiness awide.
Surmounted it thus dizzily ; o'erleapt
Fell chasms perilously athwart; abysms gaunt,
Remorseless bracken tarns, the desert's haunt,
Each slippery spiss and slough, it overcame,
Winding and wending ever higher and higher
Tortuous yet steady-sure.
Even so, despite I could not see
Aught goal, withal its callow brow to daunt
The hazardous soul, it bore a subtle lure
Touching the deepest founts of high desire.

Stretched on my Left, thus did it seem to
me,

Broadly a rich demesne lay, liberal
And affluent, in spacious festival
Arrayed. Mirth and the wealth of song
Swelled thro' its gaily caparisoned cope,
Whose portals swung wide ope—
Falling upon my ears in ribaldry
And merry laughter lewd :
Nowhither led it seemingly ; soft and strong
Giddily sprang its mirth and ultimate hope.
Yet scarce could I resolve it, for its air
Quivered and scintillated glamours dense,
A palpable mist of golden vapour, whence,
On my amazing sight, there flitted nude
The flash of forms voluptuous and rare,
Whose ruby lips soft ruddy juices woo'd.

Pondering I hovered ; each the several ways
Touched its responsive motion : this, that wound
Whither I knew not, travail amid and stain,
Awoke the fount of thought ; that, the sheer gain
Of liberal ecstasy, of flowing days
And nightless hours forgetful, bound around
Of irkless ease : this spake Olympus found,
Endeavour's glowing thew, Achievement high ;
That struck all blood to fever, till I fain
Had slipped the leash. Perplexedly sat I.
Then from the mirth and ribaldry outstept
Beauty her very self : Of motion free,
In grace voluptuous she swam on me,
Her pursed lips murmurous of a mellow strain.
Soft as the stars at evenfall
Smiled her rare eyes from forth the shimmering
air

Hanging about her yet—her veriest pall,
Save that an all-exuberant tide of hair
Entwound her soft and sensuous flesh. So swept
She, gracious ; I her other-heedless thane.
Rare love, mellow voluptuous love,
Shone from her wondrous eyes, fell from her
tongue
Melodious, dwelt on the delicate bloom
Of her seductive limbs : munificence
Of love rioted in her wayward hair
Falling heedlessly, and clung
Ecstatic in the tremulous air's perfume.
Visionary I gazed ; my mutinous blood,
Each drop particularly fraught with so
Complete an ecstasy, coursed thro' my sense
With populous colloquy, pouring a vast flood
Of dizzy whispers on my ears awhile.



Invitingly oped she her arms ; a smile
Broke her soft lips ; then, rapturously and low,
Fluted this murmurous music thro' the air,
In woven assonances, liquid measures,
Her blissful syllables spelling the pleasures
Her wares that were.

“ Sweet, come with me ; learn out my rare
requite !

Sweet, come to me, so shall I be to thee
A passionate delight !

Let us enwrap us in the robes of Pleasure ;
Owe no confining marge, but full and free
Hold Love's exultant measure.

Claim lordship on these lips ; make this em-
brace

Of strenuous limbs thine to the tilth of
days ;

The exquisitry of this face,
If so to thee, scan with thine eager eyes :

Flash linking flash, all in a wondering gaze,
Twin in our ecstasies.

The fragrant largess of this liberal hair
Shall twine us twain about as we shall twine
Hid in Love's secret lair ;
Or mantle down thy shoulder as I lay
This peach-soft bloom of loveliness on thine
And Love's low message say.

Then come to me ; yea, let me be to thee
Love's veriest scope of all ; in these soft eyes
Spell thine Eternity.

Ah, wherefore hesitant hang ? These plenteous
halls

Hunger for thee, as I, with full surmise :
Lords be we all, not thralls !”

So ceased she : flashing from her challenging
eyes

Arch invitations, boldly coy. The air,
Loth to let slip such bliss,
Clung to its echoing whispers, murmurous-
wise,

In passionate ecstasy. And yet, howe'er
Each swollen vein of mine with knotted strain
Stood high, content for one celestial kiss
To cheapen Life and Thought, a distant pain
Fettered me with disturbed uncertainty.
Hesitant I glanced away ; held of a doubt ;

Tost 'twixt passion and fear: tentatively
My eye shot roundabout,
Each freighting all my venture on a thought.
Then from the silvery glooms, a wizardry,
fraught
With an imperative touch, fell on my soul,
Drawing all my thought thither with harsh
control.
So, as I glowered upon its portals, wan,
Gaunt, lofty, lifting up a parlous height
Of shadowy phantasy, before its brink
Palely the air shivered, and its atoms shone
Pregnant with waking light.
Unknowing what its purport, what to think
Scarce dared I hazard—gazing, smote to trance,
Riveted there with every thought and glance.
The pallid atoms, hither-thither mazed,

Smitten with iridescent rigours, shaped
As to an outline—gaunt and leanly draped
With flowing vesture, bony arms upraised
Talon-befingered. Its Visage all was wan,
Harrowed and sexless, like some skeleton
Draped o'er with lifeless skin. Its Brow, or
what
Seemed like to Brow, hungered the heavy
skies.

Its glittering eyes
Gleamed coldly in great orbs. 'Twas steely-
lipped.

Its Trunk, Its ruinous Midst—oh, tell it not !
Most like 'twas to a livid dream forgot,
And waked to horror at fell Memory's whims !
A sweaty Terror sat upon my limbs ;
My natural Fell awoke to life, and stood

Erect with palpable horror ; and all my blood
Crowded its mart of motion, fear-begot,
Thither to escape. Then from the Phantom
chill

Upon the palpitant air these measures dripped
In numbers ill.

“ Mortal, be not deceived !
Despise these cloying measures, they are false !
Withhold imagination from the calls
Of sensuous privilege. Straightway be cleaved
Thence, and away ! And hearken now to me.
Heed these rare strictures ! Prize not thy frail
self :

Strive for a larger Weal ; Felicity
Foots only thus. Perplex thy brain for Man,
And his complacent peace : eschew the pelf
Of isolate happiness ; so shall thy span

Compound the highest achievement. Manacles
Spell subtler bliss than liberty ; in sooth
Are veriest liberty ; yet if not so,
Thine the dear joy of conning out the cells
Of worthier constraint. Scan virtuous Truth ;
Search out her compeers with a quickening throe
Of ecstasied thought. Love Justice. Knowledge

sue

And track, following on tho' dark disruth
Dog all thy painful way. Think nobly true ;
Compassionately soothe the sick of soul,
Life's troubled children. Learn a high control,
And abdicate thyself, Love's grace to woo.
Let Equity thine equal fingers turn
On low and lofty, sleek and lean alike,
Achievement's sons and whoso hungering
yearn :

Discriminate not 'twixt, for all are one
And indivisible. Base passions shun
And flee: strike not at all; yet if thou strike,
Strike for the high and meritorious claim,
As thou may'st judge: let not thy wrath
Abide the twilight fall; nor let thy shame
Of liverous passions issue forth
On days that step not yet, sullyng thy thought
And others' peace—weightier these than thine!
Be kind, be true, be sweet, to all and aught.
Ponder these principles; deep at thy soul
Will commendation leap in greeting; lo,
Even now bestirs thy thought. Arise, divine
Life as a loftier scroll
To trace thy character on, come weal or woe.
Passion is soon be-charred; but elevate thought
Strews an increasing largess. Turn aside

Yon ruddy Whore mellisonant; malign
She and her subtle craft are, howsoe'er
Deceit encompasses her feverous lair.
This thy true lot of life, withal 'tis fraught
With hardihood and hazard so: abide
Its mandate to thee, tread it dauntlessly.
'Tis its abundant recompense; and a court
All-continent. As is my tongue allied
With thy quick thought, so hearken thou
to me,
Fearful of nought!"

Joint with its utterance so,
Twisting, It thrust Its talon fingers thro'
The misty portals, spare and gaunt. Below
Fearfully sat I then, tho' less of fear
Shook o'er my limbs; for thought had spurned
the soil,

Touched by the words, and broken on my ear
A callow incongruity betwixt
The lips that uttered what the words did woo.
The pale air drank the silence, as the coil
Of tortuous precepts ceased. Then, intermixt,
Dizzy, as was each thought and riotous sense,
There unwound thence
Vivid upon my soul this nucleus clear :
So forth I uttered :—

“Tell, tell me thy Name!

Who art thou that so bidd’st me? Whence thy
claim :
Wherfrom derives it? Whither its purport
high?

Art thou thine own? If so, declare me now
What rare enfranchisement shall bondage ply
At thy behest? Else, forth produce thy script;

Unwind thy high commission, whereto bow
Perforce I need, heedless of pleasures clipt,
Or purple rapture, on yon path awry
To attempt a hazardous snare!"

Toward me then turned It ; and with baneful
stare
Struck chill my mood defiant. Irked with
thought,
Fear, and the lees of passion, sat I thus ;
While the dim Spectre touched Its answer,
wrought
Icily dolorous.

"I am Duty : I
Sway all the lot of man. His tentative life
Steps subtly to my measures ; in fine deed
Is my attenuate speech :—at very strife

His tongue invokes mine arm. I ratify
His hesitant counsels, troublous thoughts, with
 thrall

And edict ; or annul his querulous creed.

Evanishment were very loss of all :

It would evacuate the World of what
Coheser its several elements ; social peace,
Concord and Amity, the common lot
Of neighbourly calm, would rot and palter.

Cease

Rebellious queries ; heed my formulate call :
Strip to it, and proceed ! ”

Then borne upon a breath
Melodious, swept a wonder-wealth of song
Vivifying all the air. Again my blood
It wrought to populous utterance, hot as strong
In riotous desire. Were it to Death,

My passion mouthed no bit, but in a flood
Tumultuous had swept me on its wide
Revelry high, out to the perilous Main
Lawless as limnless, save that the Spectral Bane
Fettered me helpless. So once more
My tongue uprose : " Show me thy script ! " I
cried,
Poised 'twixt the blushing ecstasy, and the frore
Spectre of ruinous side.
" What is't to me, this social affluence,
The agglomerate frame of peace, when ecstasy
Raps loudly at my soul ? What gain hast thou ?
Yon dismal gloom, barren and dim and chill,
Say, what felicity
Commensurate with this Lady's exquisite sense
Bestows it ? Utter thy delightful fill
Alternate for my choice ; hereafter, now,

Or how thou wilt! Yet if not so, declare
Thy dread commission, bounden upon my soul!
Expound me aught for iridescent goal
Whereto this region stretches! Do I fall,
Pale Ogre, how shall large omnipotence
Brace thy lean thew? Oh, speak! I conjure
thee, speak!
If on a bleak
Perilous pivot swung; if in the abyss
Of Failure clutched, while subtle whispers
hiss
Sinuous about me—say, what benison fair
Awakes to comfort from thy callow thrall?
If Ill and Sorrow rear
Spectral athwart my eyes, and this hued cheek
Fall ashen like thine own, what then thy cheer,
Grim Apparition? what thy comfort then,

Dim Spectre? Hold tho'; have enough of
this!

Fearless I ask again,
Art uttered of another ; or art weak,
Continent in thyself? Comest thou with bliss
For largess? Else, declare thy peerless script,
Disclose thy high commission, Ogre blear,
Thou talon-fingered Horror, steely-lipped!"

Doubtfully ceased I : wound amid my frame
Raged complicated elements. Aerial thought
On metaphysic pinion soared aloft ;
While tremulous passion struck my blood, and
wrought

Sensual within me, fell and subtly soft.
Fear, anger, scorn and doubt, in complex claim
Tost all disorderly. Yet most to cleave

Decision knew I then, whate'er might be,
Out from the tangled elements. So I turned
Whither the Shape let fall Its jaw to weave
Its chill articulation passionlessly.
Ill-eeriely fell Its speech, as tho' It spurned
Life's various intonation, to answer me
What in high mien I sought.

"Mortal, not mine

Scripts to declare ; neither attorneys high
To sate thy heart wherewith. My voice pro-
ceeds
Swift to thy nobler self. Didst thou apply
Reason thereto, or thought deliberative,
What hesitancy were there? Loftier than
creeds
Is my transcendent Word ; that yet doth twine
Rooted amid thy need. They that supine

Wallow in fell lasciviousness, are brutes
Trivial, corporeal ; their weary bliss,
Blinding their very selves, I say, despise :
Esteem not that they misesteem. Rare fruits,
Self-generative, of elevate thought, and mind
Delicately poised, I proffer thee. Be wise ;
Set up on high thy pleasure : so to live
Were to be quit of chance.—That thou amiss
Shouldst cast thy fluttering days were piteous-
blind,
Seeing they are all, and veriest all : fulfil
Thy days, then, with a high felicity.
Too soon shall Death sweep up thy militant
will ;
And bind thee in the dark. Yet heed thou this :
Tho' thou snuff out ; a thing that was ; yet
still,

The texture of thy thought, the workmanship
Of hand or utterant lip,
Thy heart's aroma, personality
In sooth, shall flourish yet, for good or ill,
Upon the broad Earth's face. So take my
voice,
And, knowing it true, utterly cast thy choice !
I am thine Ultimate Good, Supreme, and Free,
Nothing above me in the wide Universe."

Then from my lips broke there a bitter curse.
Glib the words struck with subtle irony
Traverse athwart my hope. Vivid and strong
My thought had stood dilate, passionately
Grappling amid the eternal verities,
Touched to it by the conflict ; and seemed now
Clutching the air. A whelming sense of wrong

Flushed all my mood. As one who sees
All things, and nothing clearly, fearless of
brow
I shook my answer free.

“ My nobler Self !
Mine ultimate Good ! Trickster with subtle
speech !

What nobler self have I, what high, what low,
Contradistinguished, save what thou wouldest
teach

Arbitrary of choice ? What ultimate good,
But as my heart dictates, throbbing to know
The exquisite peak of pleasure, if the deep
Swallow me utterly up ? But what I would
That should I, if thou art the ultimate All,
And I no more than this ! Thou Thing un-
kempt,

Pallid of tongue and hue, so wouldest thou
tempt

My feet from blushing sweets aside? So charm
My hazardous soul to climb

Yon dizzy pinnacle, that hath no prime
Nor cause of being, with this riotous balm,—

To sweat, to stint, to travail, and to fall
Sheer out of time in night. Begone, thou
Gloom!

Away, thou Shape of ill! Come when the
tomb,

'Twixt this and that omnipotent time
Each tottering moment shall be packed with
twice

Its fraught of pleasures; or come surfeit, to
illume

The shadow of joy, shall every rare device

Rivet the transient hour. Tread yon dread way ?
Nay, that I will not ! Unto thee I turn,
Vision ecstatic, tangible withal,
From thee to learn
All the soft wonders of thy disarray."

So, fearless, turned I : yet ere thought to deed
Quickened my members, swift upon the air
Luxuriously this song sped, deft and rare,
Beckoning me to speed.

"Come, my love, to love me ; come !
Life is but the tangled sum
Of thy being's bitter hum.
Tarry not, the days flit by ;
Soon thy bloom shall wither : I
Proffer fruits that never fly.

Never ; for thy brief decree
Folds in all eternity :
Nought survives thee ; so to me
Come, to taste the liberal treasure
I bestrew whose name is Pleasure ;
Share mine overflowing measure.
Ah ! come to me ; then will I show
All that thine utmost heart would know :
Laughter loud, and whispers low,
Ruddy joy, soft lips and kisses,
Opening out Life's raptest blisses.
This thy Heaven ; yea, whoso misses
This, shall slip the rarest worth
Possible to his strenuous girth,
In the delicious garden of Earth.
So come to me, dear love, my sweet,
Time and the Hours are all too fleet ;

Quaff my goblet, rarely meet
For superb humanity.
Confines spurn ; be large, be free ;
'Tis thy true Felicity !
What is Duty's blatant call ?
I am Duty, I am All ;
I am Beauty : none may fall
On aught supremer arm than mine ;
I am God, I am divine ;
Life's uttermost largess is my shrine.
Wouldst thou live to wander wan ?
Dearest, never ! freedom con,
And share my fearless halcyon.
Life is all thy tangled sum,
Then hold not so, fearful and numb,
But come to me, dear husband, come,
Come !"

Wilder'd I hearkened; held my tremulous
limbs

Awhile, and heard, impassioned. From her
eyes

Soft messages flashed o'er their lidded brims
Coyly upon me. Throwing forth her arms
She yearned on me, her hair's luxuriant guise
Falling carelessly and free, while she her
charms

Spun, threading in her woof of thought. The
air,

Murmuring her music yet, hung over me
As heaving breast to breast we stood, surmise
Holding me feeble and faint, ecstatically.

Then did I burst away
Restraint; tossing off wrinkled Care
I strode toward the dear Angel of my Dream.

Nigh had I touched her palm ; when, swift and
clear,

Loud with the trumpet's tongue, imperative,
Dulcent to hear,

A Voice of awful import thundered—

“ Stay ! ”

Sudden I reared. As doth revulsion give
Thought interwound with thought, so did it
seem

I hung halting. Furtively, distractedly,
I cast my gaze about, so to divine
Whence the high edict sprang. The Ogre
blear

Was gone : fled with its eye malign
As it had never been. Far up the course
Precipitous and steep I seemed to see,
Anew upon my eyes, a burning dome

Scintillating, radiating from its source
A hesitant gleam adown the path. Entranced
I hung upon the sight.
Then fear fell on me; for from thence did come,
Stately, magnificent, tenfold more bright
Than the sun's vivid noontide, crystal-clear,
A Shape surpassing loveliness. On my thought
Paled all things else save that transcendent
 Fear.

Steadily it advanced :
From small to great, from great unreckonable,
Stately, deliberative, supreme, of port
Serene and lofty, steadily so it came
Sweeping the callow path. Struck with its spell
I burned with aching eyes. Subtly a Flame
Encircled it, of silver and of gold,
Sardine and jasper iridescent, blue,

Purple and exquisite scarlet, all inwrought
To one pure hue too vivid to behold.
So as it nearer swept I threw
My face upon the dust, and thrust my eyes
Upon my veiling palms, dizzy to death,
Sick with amaze ; when a most mellow breath
Softly outspake,
“ Frail child of Man, arise !
For I would speak with thee !”

No choice had I
Save to obey that voice imperative ;
However it seemed to me to look and live
Crost opposite elements. Dazedly I cast
Upward a timorous glance, encountered by
So mellow a gaze ; wherein which very beam
I touched sustaining succour. Towering vast
He stood dilate with wonder ; and did seem

To crowd the heavens with majesty, tho' within
My wandering vision. Neath his snowy hair,
Lit with intrinsic brilliance, shone his eyes,
Where loomed long mysteries of eternity.
His misty brow domed firmamental-wise,
Swelling beneath its locks. 'Twas wondrous
fair :

Fair unto tottering thought ! His very robes,
Like the unblemished snow, thrice-purged,
wherein
Flowed his proportions spacious, moved and
shone
Instinct with sinuous life. Hesitantly
I stammered—

“ Stranger fair, thy Name ! Forgive
My curious temper ! Yield me strength to
live ! ”

He bent on me twin eyes : and spake.
Then did the whirling stars and heavenly
globes,
The ravenous winds, awake,
And hang in poise ecstatic. Sweet upon
My aching ears, incontinent of such bliss
Celestial, there awoke a halcyon
Of various, high, mellifluous harmony :
In measures like to this :

“Wouldst thou my Name,
Mortal immortal; wouldst acquaint thy thought
With my Renown ? How shall I tell it thee ?
Speech may not utter it, for words are wrought
Empirical, in the stout smithy of life.
Couldst thou envisage its supremacy
Then were toil done ; and the pure spirit’s strife,
Tempering the thew withal, wrought purposeless

And cheap. Considerest thou not Man's Aim,
The Ages down, to utter Loveliness,
Or to plumb Truth, to measure Equity,
Or Justice poise ; affixing phrases so
Unto what trailing robes he sees. These all
Am I, one and complete. When he shall know
Freedom, deck on a larger life, each thrall
Corporeal shudder off, standing superb,
Munificent, then shall he see me face
To spiritous face : till then must I disturb
His manifold sense, to win him worthy of me.
Before his soul awoke was I : nay, more,
I touched his thought to life. From forth of
nought
I bad him issue, setting my seal thereon :—
So doth the veriest hind of all his race
Grope tentative after me. Then when he bore

Manhood erect, unparagoned, upon
Earth's lucent air I woke the soul of song
Choired by the sons of morning. All the court
Of glittering Heaven, in the dread womb of
Night ;
The stately march celestial ; throng on throng
Wheeling from gloom to gloom, in perilous
flight
Over the unsearched deeps ; the air ; the seas ;
The bountiful Earth ;—my handiwork were
these
In the wide crucibles of steady Time.
Withal, tho' such I seem to be,
Yet am I not at all : the voiceless clod
Owns substance more than I. Spaceless, sub-
lime,
I am the Breath Divine ; the Voice of God ;

His concentrate Radiation : thence wend I,
Thither to trend again, dependently ;
Aerial, effulgent, winging the formless deeps.
Ecstatic Wisdom called they me awhile
Who touched my billowy robes. Yet, tho' I ply
Authoritative edict, bidding thee
Heed, as my fount is high, my voice o'erleaps
Articular creed, swift to thy resonant soul
Brooding deliberative. Well knowest thou
That evanescent languors do beguile
The soul's high bent. Wherefore,—save that
thine eye
Hath glimpsed a billowy Vision, subtly spun,
Floating upon thy thought, of high control
Fashioning a peerless state, noble and pure,
Whose stately essence not the clammy brow
Of Death shall dissipate ? Thou dreamest this :

And this I utter now. That thou wouldst not
Forego the Tempter's vivid lure,
Most truly tell I, Pleasure is not one
But twain, nor think licentious libertine bliss
Befits the splendour of thy soul, begot
Divine, bred for eternal pride. Above
Each fell delight, debased upon the soil,
Soars a pure counterpart, winging the air :
Thou canst but lust upon the one ; but Love
Impassioned doth the other wake. 'Tis toil ;
I cloak it not ; yet 'tis a joy that bides,
Swelling the more the hoarier, till Day dawn
And shadows flit away. Decide thee then !
Cast thy free choice ! These portals lead thee
where,
Soul-plumed, new realms upon thy flight are
borne.

Brace up thy thew ! Tread out this path, that
guides

Whither pure bliss shall rock thy dizzy ken,
And end thy weary coil ! ”

Wondering the Angel bound me ; scarce a
glance

Turned I away upon yon Harlot nude,
Chasteless and brazen, touching my coarser
sense

Distastefully ; not wholly impotent.

In visionary mood

Hung I, swell'n on the flow of eloquence
To thought on thought. Nor less did ravish-
ment,

Exhaling music on its wing, uplift my soul,
Gazing upon that beauteous Eminence.

Enthralled so was I held. Then as my trance
Bated awhile, I searched my tongue's control.

“ Ecstatic Flame ! ” I broke, “ yet would I know
Further one thing. Truly I bow before thee !
I yield my due of homage ; I adore thee,
Eternal Radiance from on high ! Thou bright
Image immortal ! Yet, do I tempt the throe
Of yon steep way, what strength shall flush my
thew

Sinking amid its steeps ? Yea, as I woo
Its delicate largess, if my feeble might
Fail of its scintillant goal, what then ? What
deed,
What earnest, decks my quest, so to exchange
For problematical bliss the vivid range
Of present sweets. Fool I to chance the meed

Of dusk futurity for the portion sprung
Flashing upon my sight! Forgive this tongue
Imperious, recalcitrant; yet sure,
I utter freely, speaking as I read
Diverse each several lure."

Tranquil, immovable, in a mien that won
Me wholly out, respondent it begun :—
" The choice thine own; cast as thou wilt: 'tis
mine
But to declare the Truth. Who shall assign
Arigh his lot, him shall I flush with strength,
Leaping from might to might. Each vision
true
Opens to wider bliss: each vanquished thrall
Touches to larger freedom; lea on lea
Bounding to vision to Life's uttermost length.

I woo not, but am woo'd ; and yet withal
Woo I ; imperative my lineaments woo
For sheer vitality. Thus shall I thee.
Think'st thou the end shall fail ? Who per-
severes

Assuredly shall clasp the ultimate goal ;
If ultimate goal there be, for bliss shall roll
Boundless before thy view. I say not fears
Shall cease, that strife shall vanish, or that all
Conjured rhapsodical, dispassionately
Shall swim in peace. Nay, all thy passionate
days

Shall reach from peak to peak, trial amid,
Gainsayers athwart, waking Life's deepest zest.
Yet shall the goal gleam rare before thy gaze ;
And if upon thy quest,
Sinking dispirited, the goal be hid

Wrapt in a gloomy mist, 'twill pass awhile,
And thou be all thy strenuous self again. Ally
Thyself to me, nor seek thee to beguile
Idly the transient hours, and all that I
Have shown before thy sight fulfilled shall be.
I say 't; and am its earnest eternally."

And then methought I stood on quaking limb,
Forth to proceed upon that wizard way.
Heaven-high the portals towered above me;
dim
Stretched the precipitous path, tortuous and
grey,
Leaping from crag to crag. Then all the gloom
Seized fast about me, as with hesitant stride
I took its edge initiative. Yet on
Went I, holding a dauntless pride

Steady within me ; on and on, upon
The slippery crags, amid the dunes and meres,
Poised oft o'er bottomless pits, turning beside
Pitiless tarns, brackish with mortal tears.
As forth I strode, fairer and yet more fair
Shone the horizon ; rarer did illume
Its scintillant goal my passage lofty and strait.
And my high Mentor, steady before my eye,
Shone so exceeding beauteous, more and more,
Increasing so in clarity, scope, and air,
That a wild ecstasy possessed my thought,
Riotous and fervid in me. Steadily
So followed I, with resolute thew where'er
It led me forth, casting no glance away :
Thus on, yet on ; waning and waxing on.
Yet, as I sped, methought a dizzy shore
Beguiled my feet aside, so to descry

What depths the abysm held. Pallid and wan
Shrank my Instructor on my curious eye.
Treading its perilous edge I did essay
To plumb the gulf, with darkness doubly
fraught ;
When, gazing with profound intent, a wind
Broke with an awful triumph up its steep
Embankments jagged forth on me.
All terror-strick'n upstarted I, to find
'Twas but the embers crumbling in the grate,
Loud on the icy Night. Awakened so
Musing I stood to recollect, and lo !
My lips had formed to prayer.—
Then thro' the gloom I gat me to my sleep.

TO A THRUSH

Singing one Spring morn 'mid deepest fog

Throstle-bird !

I have heard

This thy voice of cheer,

As I lay

In the sway

Of a waking fear ;

And its message dropt me peace,

From its rapt career.

Yet, say how
Thou may'st now
Every note prolong !
Doth the fog
Never clog
Never still thy song ?
Doth thy music ever rise
Mellow, sweet, and strong ?

Ho ! when Morn
Doth adorn
Shuddering Mother Earth,
Jocund Day
Swelling gay,
Kingly in his girth,
I may something understand
This so mellow mirth.

But when morn
Rises worn,
As on gloomy wing ;
When in murk
Light doth lurk
Like some callow thing,
Tell me, throstle, how thou then
Cheerily canst sing ?

Oftentime
Peace sublime,
'Mid the fairest day,
Flickers wan
And is gone
Phantom on its way,
Then a sudden gloom enshrouds
Hearts within its sway.

Then the smile
Fades awhile,
Then the laugh is still,
Then the tune
Falters, hewn
By the touch of Ill,
Then Life's music flutters low
Sorrow to fulfil.

Ill-content
To be pent
Out of aught, griefs come
All unbid
Right amid
Spirits frolicsome :
Ah ! then lips attuned to praise
Press each other dumb !

Yet, sweet bird,
Nought has blurred
These most wondrous throes :
Melody
Rapt and free
Out the midst of woes ;
May I turn to thee to learn
What thy spirit knows !

That when gloom
Like a doom
Blots the azure sky,
I may learn
Blight to spurn,
And the Day descry,
Howsoe'er the Word of Ill
 Spells the Earth awry.

Smirk and smutch
May I touch
To a loftier scheme,
Irk and Doubt
Ravelling out
In a song supreme ;
As, rare bird, thy spirits turn
Sturdily thy theme.

MULTUM IN PARVO

BABY-CHILD,

Mystery of mysteries,

Com'st thou from the starry skies

Pleased to don Life's motley guise

Dark and wild?

Frail and slight,

Hardly uttered of the Womb,

Lov'st thou Sorrow, Want and Gloom

So to exchange for song and bloom

Sin and blight?

Swaddled thus,
What a Wonder may'st thou be
Touched by mystic Destiny,
Oh, trite Possibility
Marvellous !

Drowsy so,
Doth a mighty Spirit brace
Earthy thews anew ; to trace
Deeds that mock at Time and Place,
Bond and throe ?

Baby-fists,
Shall they clutch the flashing blade,
Touch the use of politic aid,
Tilt with sinew undismayed
In Life's lists ?



Chubby things,
Shall they stretch a loving hand
Unto such on Life's rough strand
As may never understand
Sheltering wings?

Baby-feet,
Scarce distinguishable forms,
Must they foot amid Life's storms
Lonely; none to soothe its qualms,
None to weet?

Wearied, sore,
Hardly shall they seek to run
Up the passes where begun
All is strife till strife is done
Evermore?

Baby-face,
Shall it wear the print of Time,
Woven o'er with hoary rime :
Or shall Death in sunnier clime
Pallor trace ?

As years wend,
Shall its lineaments tell the sage
Scarred with honourable age,
Ere Life turn its latest page
For the End ?

Liquid eyes,
Whence outpeers the wizard soul,
Shall its lustre spell control
Calm, impregnable and whole,
Firm and wise ?

Flame and flash
Only when a careless foot
Tramples thro' Life's cruel bruit
Heedless, heartless, then to shoot
Hates that slash !

Be it so !
Shall they wizard wonders see
In the wrapt Futurity,
Whither, swathing shackles free,
Time must go ?

Aerial ships,
Searching out the vasty blue,
Darting whither to endue
Peace with beauty, Warfare's new
Scathing whips ?

Brotherhood :

Twining men of every race,
Knowing neither high nor base,
Spurning pomp and pride of place,
One of brood ?

Howe'er 'tis,
Baby, shun no Duty's call,
Fear thy God, love peoples all,
Then whatever shall befall,
Thine is bliss !

• • • • •
Lovely child,
Smiling with such heedless eyes,
Com'st thou from the starry skies
So to search Life's enterprise
Dark and wild ?

FRIENDS vanish at my face ; yet, as they fly,
Swoll'n with the sombre mood of conjured
schism,

I hear thee say thou whom the holy chrism
Has sealed as mine eternal—" Dear, do I
Outweigh the scales ; if this one form be nigh,
Shall that suffice thee in this dark abysm ?"
Ah, think, Belov'd ! did some great cataclysm
Fierce-swoop upon to enshroud the midnight sky,
Did gulf the multitudinous stars but one,
Some Betelgeuse, in beauty-flame of love
Gleaming and twinkling in the lowly mart
Of tremulous darkness, how 'twould swell upon
The vaults of Heaven ; how rare so poised
above !

Even so in lone magnificence thou art !

A FANCY fair comes floating on my thought
When on the wildering trammels I am caught
Of pensive studies ; as the surrounding scheme
Fades and dissolves, and coming Hours gleam
Visionary the musing realms athwart :
That thou and I, all our keen battles fought,
Serene and hoar, past touch of withering aught,
Shall yet enkindle love, and kiss, and dream

A Fancy fair.

My Dearest, be this so ! Let us be wrought
So to a unity as the Hours, full-fraught
With Blight and Bloom, slip by ; let us esteem
The other in our loves so high-supreme,
That thus, Dear Heart, this Vision may be not

A Fancy fair.

As is the silver night
Upon the sombre sea,
In ecstasy of might
Art thou to me.

As are the stars beyond
Aught compass or control,
As glittering diamond,
So thy pure soul.

As doth the throstle tell
His mystery complete,
Such is thy subtle spell,
Yet oh ! how sweet !

So cam'st thou unto me
Love's mystic wand to wield ;
Then I, who would be free,
Did gladly yield.

BELOV̄ED, hast perceived a throstle tune
His liberal wealth of song,
'Mid the leafy coverts, all a lucent noon,
Where Audience none had he, yet, desolate,
He fluted keen and strong
Appreciated only by his mate?

Even so sing I, sequestered and alone.
No World's large ear to woo
My measures all upon thy feet are thrown.
My Mate thou art, my single Audience thou,
Thence never do I sue
Vainly for plaudit: is not this enow?

“ BELOVED, HAST PERCEIVED ”

Ah, if that throstle glimpsed a Vision clear,
A Vision seeming Truth ;
If unto him, from Life's encrusting sphere,
An iridescent Beauty had out-twirled,
In yon sequestered booth
How would he chafe his soul to reach the
World !

EXILE

I AWAKE from dreams of thee,
From the unquiet realms of sleep ;
I awake from Felicity,
I awake to thoughts that keep
Their bitterness hid and deep.

I awake from dreams of love
Ecstatic, so pure, so sweet ;
I awake—'tis only to prove
That the midday sun shall beat
On my lonely lips and feet.

OH, I have thee, Asthore : deep at this heart
Thy presence is a fragrance subtly-rare,
As blooms exhale the midnight hour. What-
e'er

I do, will, dream, aspire, achieve, thou art
My Aim, my End. Nay, more, the absolute
part

Of my Soul's life ! Should hollow-eyed De-
spair

Clutch on me it is only that I fare
Forth thro' the day, and barter at Life's mart,
Yet fail to win thee home. When Truth to
woo me

Comes, she arrays her in thy form ; and those

Assimilate twins, Beauty and Duty, to me
Are thee and thy soft word. In toil, repose,
Asleep, awake, thy spirit whispers thro' me ;
Nor boast I hours thou dost not ope and close.

EACH hath the Type of bliss within his thought
That utters for him all his Life would be :
The summit of his soul's felicity,
The consummation wherein should be wrought
In deft attainment all his spirit bought
Awhile in fervent hope—whose roundest fee
'Twas good to pay. 'Tis so : enough ! For me,
Be it amiss or be it fitly sought,
This would I crave—that mine and thy full soul
May touch their mutual deep content, howe'er
Life twists its tortuous course ; may still control
Their Individuality, yet fare
So subtly each on each, that as one whole
They might stretch to their goal in God's pure
air.

A WORD TO THE CZAR

(Penned on "Valdimir's Day," January 22, 1905.)

THOU great Usurper of the Liberty
Of hapless Men and Maids, this gory shame
Shall wrap thee in a livid Cloak of Flame
Ere days have swoll'n to years. We who are
free,
Who owe no fouling bond of Tyranny,
We look at Thee, and execrate thy Name :
Nor in our Vision art thou quit of blame
That by the hand of him who stood for thee
This bloody deed was done. Across the Years,
And from the lips of peoples one and all,

A mighty curse rolls on, to reach His ears
Who silently surveys thy hastening fall :—
Soon may His Might pluck from thy reeking
Hand
Thy Batôn of a self-usurped command !

VIKING-THROES

LIFE'S a Battle, full of stress,
Full of Change,
Struggle, Combat, Weariness,
Circling range—
Be limbs and heart sore heavy, yet
Foe on foe is set.

Give me fingers for the Fight
Keen and strong ;
Give a Mind that swerves no mite
'Mid the Throng ;
Beget me Valour, stiffly-grown,
Hewn to stand alone.

Grant such Virtue so to be
So to dare,
That tho' all may faint or flee
—Howsoe'er
The Fight may turn—I yet shall stand
Firm in Eye and Hand.

Let some Purpose thro' my tears
Gleam and glow,
Ah ! let not the ruining Years,
Full of woe,
Engulf then in their dim embrace
That high spectral Grace.

Yet, all Boon of boons above,
This I crave,

Let a tender ample Love
My Spirit save
Forth from the harsh ungentle chains
Fight so oft attains.

“SENTENTIOUS”

HEARD I a Preacher loud and high,
With speech mellifluous,
Who deftly wove before mine eye
Doctrines circuitous.

I heard him, ay, I gladly heard,
Heard all he had to tell—
Thinking full many a prettier bird
Warbled a tithe as well.

Then thought I: Friend, full sweet to hear,
Yet say, were I in need,

Were all about dim and drear,
What then might be your deed?

Full glibly do the lips relate
Expressions that the heart
Never hath gripped, whose pomp and state
Of utterance dwell apart.

And what their Worth? Barren and bald
If it be that the Hand
Wakes not so ready, whene'er called,
To make request command!

To speak, to speech, to vaunt and preach,
How passing easy 'tis!
But to stretch forth a loving hand
To souls in Ill's abyss,—

Such is the noblest part of Life ;

Ay, well to know it deep !

For Speech, 'mid daily Stress and Strife

Oft rocks the Deed asleep !

AN IDYLL OF THE BROADS

As on a river fair I sped,—
My boat beneath mine oars nigh flew,—
Amazed I saw a Scotsman's head
Whose form and visage well I knew.

He hailed me by my name, and I,
Astonied thus to see him near,
My scudding craft did thither hie
With gladness, mixt withal with fear.

For with immense accoutrement
He fished for fishes merrily :

Elaborate, magnificent,
A very king of fishers he !

His line was of the best, his rod
Superb, as likewise was his float ;
And, scorning by his mother sod,
He stood upon a varnished boat.

His mien was mighty, seriousness
Lit o'er his stedfast countenance ;
He grasped his rod with firm caress,
Anxiety in every glance.

His son lay by to render aid
When salmon carried off his bait,
Or whales, maybe, who nought afraid
Cared nothing for his sombre state.

With reverence and thrilling throe
I drew anear with slow approach ;—
Yet need I not have quivered so,
For all that river held was roach !

TO A "CANTERBURY BELL"!

RARE lovely Bloom ! dear sweet simplicity,
Nodding beneath the Heavens thy delicate
lure !

Thine exquisite sculpture doth upcall on me
The realms of wonder, visionary and pure !
I gaze on thee, thou waxen delicate,
Until the World and all its strutting pelf
Fade wanly hence, and an ecstatic scene
Of fauns and goblins, decked in legend state,
Steps faintly forth, to bear my dizzy self
Within their tripping circles, nought between.

There, 'mid the hedgerow's tortuous garlands,

fair

And blithe thou droop'st thy lovely brow ; and

thence

Thy zephyry fragrance, delicate and rare,

Steals with a dewy breath upon my sense.

Eager I seek thee out then, to behold

Thy bell upon the vesper breezes toll

Pomp's knelling requiem with solemn nod,

Thou purest Joy, 'mid teeming fold on fold

Of prodigal waywardness, is this thy dole,

Simplicity that boasts no touch save God ?

The Honeysuckle's heavily-laden breath

Floats on the balmy winds in languid fumes ;

The Nightshade breathes its careless boon of

death

To lips that tamper lightly with its blooms ;
The Meadow-sweet with carved tiaras deft ;
The Poppy-petal's crumpled charactery ;
The tangly ramified Convolvulus ;—
All of their several virtues are bereft
At the soft touch of thy Simplicity,
Simplicity of peace voluptuous.

Oh, exquisite marvel, whither shall I turn
To sate the thirstings thou hast spoken up ?
My soul with vast inquietude doth burn.
Rare drafts are there within thy luscious cup
That I may put my lips upon its brim,
And, sloughing off Earth's smutch and soilure,
quaff
Deeply the secrets of eternal ease ?
Or sway'st thou merely as a transient whim,

Idle, capricious, windward-driven chaff?

Yet surely, surely thou art more than these!

Or very All, or very Nothing: why

Hast thou upspoken thirst for what is not

If thou and I shall clutch the gloom, and die,

Life but a tangled boon, a vicious blot,

Spun by the sightless Powers? Nay, shalt not

thou,

Elate, clad in eternal Vestiture,

Greet me upon the eternal Marge? Yea, then,

Shall not I, ageless Wisdom on my brow,

Spell out thy charm occult? Sweet Mystery

pure,

So shall I search thy secrets yet again!

THE GOLDEN MUSICIAN

MELODIOUS Bird, thy winsome word

Falls sweetly on my ear !

Stupendous Song, 'tis borne along,

Mellow and deft and clear,

Till each soul-nook with music shook

Rings back with merry cheer !

What vivid change will it so range !

Swiftly 'twill follow after

A pensive chirp with gay " stoup-stirp "

Ringing with merry laughter,

Until its chime in resonant rime

Echoes from roof and rafter.

The livelong day, come gloom or grey,
Always and ever singing ;
Be't bliss or ill so singing still,
Cheerily, merrily ringing,
Thou upon us in music thus
Spray of delight art flinging.

Is it a strand, a vagrant hand,
From Love's exalted treasure,
So bearing us voluptuous
Rare peals of delicate pleasure,
Thrilling the soul, tho' vast and whole
Its fullness mocks all measure ?

'Tis as a word inwardly stirred,
As Memory subtly lingers
O'er Hours fled by the Noon, that lie

Past touch of confident fingers,
Yet that upcall the bowered hall,
The voice of silent singers.

Then say, oh Mage of antique age,
These, are they gifts of olden
And lovelit days whereto in praise
I utter back behoden?—
See, see, thy throat trilling each note
Throbs like a zephyr golden.

There—as I gaze in rapt amaze—
Swollen with rare emotion,
Fervid of joy, scorning alloy,
Spurning a base devotion
To shackled earth, it trips a mirth
All of a heavenly potion.

A murmurous note doth freely float
Like waves of rippling water ;
Then a high song doth course along
To Sorrow uttering slaughter,
Commanding forth in merry wrath
Bliss and her jocund daughter.

Attenuate heights in perilous flights,
Soaring in eagle fashion,
Thou seekest out, from whence about
On aching ears there flash on
Rhythms unwrought, delights unthought,
Echoes of ageless passion.

Oh, this divine rare lay of thine
Rings like a heavenly lyric,
Lulling each sense, wafting me hence,

Bidding the World's Empiric
Fade on my ear awhile, to hear
Thy cadence full and spheric.

Thy splendid boon of glorious Tune
Hath tongues of fire cloven ;
Each diverse part with subtle art,
Each period rich and proven,
To touch to one theme till 'tis spun
Of texture interwoven.

Ecstatic Dreams, are these thy themes ?
Stung by thy wondrous lyre,
So wilt thou go with quickening glow,
On wings of flameless fire,
From light to light in fearless flight
Of music ever higher ?—

Till every cloud in passion proud
Mightily burst asunder,
Display a new translunar view
With its own soul of wonder :—
Be 't as it may, a wizard lay,
Or ecstasy of thunder ?

For every sphere thy song's career
So bursts upon to capture,
Amply is strewn with rhythmic tune,
Whereunto to adapt your
Melodious Verse and then rehearse
Once more its delicate rapture.

Hardly content with music pent
In melodies once given
Wilt thou again repeat the strain,

Till on by passion driven,
That every clause may peal applause
Of harmony twice striven ?

Oh, that the Muse would touch to use
This lyre as thine 'tis using !
Then might I rise with mystical eyes,
Swoll'n with the theme of musing,
Soaring athirst my song to burst
With utterance scarce of choosing.

So Song would scorn corporeal bourne ;
Dilated so pursuing
With eager breast its passionate quest,
All transient worth eschewing,
Pausing its lute awhile when, mute,
Life's towering Vasts reviewing.

How then 'twould wear a rapture rare,
An other-worldly glory ;
In rich array each simple lay
Decking Life's thought or story ;
Still dew-impearled were all the world
Sombre and blear and hoary.

On Wonder's wing 'twould featly bring
Exultant exaltation
To all that foot amid the bruit
Of daily lot and station,
In uttering such clear dreams as touch
Doubt unto Adoration,

So shall the Balm—oh winsome charm !—
Of her rhapsodic madness
Keep blithe and young the World's wild
tongue ;

Its trick of gloom and sadness
Banish away from the light of day
With an unquestioning Gladness.

The spirituous reign of Song's domain
Eternity embowers:
Ere faulty Man his Hour began
'T had rung the heavenly towers
With echoing shaft-peals, that now waft
Earth with ecstatic showers.

With hesitant ruth we ponder Truth,
Thou sing'st as thou dost know it—
Beholding it all wonder-writ,
Then unto us to show it
In sweeping tune, unwrought, pure-hewn,
Dear never-halting Poet !

Yet our frail Song 'twixt Right and Wrong
Ofttimes will pierce unwitting ;
As were the gleams of Poet's dreams
Fair beams of Beauty flitting
Whence Reason ne'er snuffed thro' the air
Wooing Time's proud permitting.

No longer with pard, kin or kith,
Stranger, so wilt thou wander
A murky isle, in splendid style
Ecstatic Song to squander
On such as fain would turn again
Thy source of Song to ponder ?

Not thine to greet the Sun's high beat
On Freedom's pinions soaring !
Nor thine the rich rapt melody which

Thy woody tribes are pouring !
But all apart with tuneful art
Spiritual realms exploring !

Within the gloom o' a dusky room,
All in a dusky City
Callow and wan, so tun'st thou on
High anthem and soft ditty ?
Scarce thine the mood and attitude
Waking a captive's pity !

What reckest thou if leafy bough
Or plaster palanquin thee !
Howe'er thou yearn for the Noons that burn
Not gloom nor bars may win thee
From the clear Joy pure of alloy
Exquisitely strung within thee.

Then sing thou on, while I upon
The flight of thy pure Vision
Am borne aloft on pinions soft,
Perceiving no elision,
Thither whence Life and Toil and Strife
Are Pity and Derision.

Yet, that I might pursue the flight,
Purer and swifter travel
Past blame or praise, till Life's Amaze
Shall dwindle and unravel,
Sweetly to shine like this of thine,
Rare Beauty, scarce a cavil.

TO ——

A STRANGER, and thou took'st me in. Great
Heart!

It fits not well my temper to high-trape
My woes before a listless world, or drape
With melancholy habit each grim part
Life bad me to, for with a sovereign art
She did it so, my stubborn thought to shape.
Yet, tho' I lightly scorn wide mouths agape,
'Twere worthy of high record, in this mart
Of barter and exchange, how I to thee
Came, all my prospect waste and spilt,
A Stranger, and with what unquestioning air

Thou took me in, and sought to succour me :
Forget it thou may'st ; likeliest is thou wilt ;
But not so I who found a heart so rare.



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